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ABSTRACT

A democratic model of educational evaluation and some policy recommendations to develop culturally appropriate evaluation are presented. The traditional hard science paradigm in research must be replaced with evaluation designed to feed back to communities of varying cultural backgrounds. The most fundamental assumption of the new model is democracy, or the democratic principle, meaning participation by people in decisions that affect them. The value-aesthetic focus is to identify shared and cherished ideas from multiple cultures. The shared value system of a multicultural democracy will be operationalized into new forms of educational evaluation through participatory design development that involves representation of each participating culture in the selection of evaluation methodology. Culture must be incorporated into the discourse categories of evaluation to make evaluation a contributing part of the democratic process of education. The bottom line for the new model of evaluation is not the use of usual descriptive information gathered from standardized and normed instruments; rather, the intent is to prescriptively reinform the participants of their own perceptions of their children's school environment, instruction, and the values transmitted. One figure presents the evaluation model. (SLD)

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A DEMOCRATIC MODEL AND SOME POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: MULTICULTURAL EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

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Introduction

We need a future in which "people" can find parity, a chance for the unrepresented majority of minorities to be heard and given a chance to participate in any decisions that affect them. Nothing to date has established the avenues or strategies, methods or designs to develop culturally appropriate evaluation procedures.

We can proceed as we have in the past and legislate what has come to be known as the "hard" science or educational psychology paradigm as the method for multicultural studies. Or, we can accept the challenge to seek out new ways to explore educational "successes" within various cultural contexts.

The challenge remains for those with technical and humanistic expertise to find a way to collect and collate cultural material in a design that gives parents and multicultural participants the dignity and even prestige of contributing to their own futures.

As educators, we speak of human rights and human dignity, democratic participation in those judgments that affect us and the quality of life we project for ourselves and our children. Yet, as we deal with fellow citizens of America's multicultural communities, the families and their children, we as researchers and/or evaluators usually presume too much. We pursue our own agendas and neglect the needs and desires of the people for whom our efforts should be intended. The negative impact of such humanistic oversights, social amnesia on "intercultural" understanding is illustrated in the following reaction by Native Americans to standard research and publication activities:

> Just as the exploitation of American Indian land and resources is of value to corporate America, research and publishing on American Indian topics is valuable to non-Indian scholars. As a result of racism, greed, and distorted perceptions of native realities, Indian culture as an economic commodity has been exploited by the dominant society with considerable damage to Indian people. Tribal people need to safeguard the borders of their cultural domains against research and publishing incursions.
>
> Community based research in Indian communities needs to be conducted in conjunction with the endorsement by tribal authorities for the purpose of ensuring that the finished

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> product has value to Indian people and is educationally beneficial.
>
> Scholarly research on Indian history and culture must take into account Indian perspectives. ...This methodology will help scholars avoid perpetuating stereotypes of Indians based on mythology, misconceptions, and romanticism. American Indian scholars need to become involved in producing research rather than serving as subjects and consumers of research. Measures such as these will ultimately introduce more accurate depictions of Indian experiences and lifestyles into the classroom. (Our Voices, Our Vision: American Indians Speak Out for Education Excellence, pp. 6-7)

As this Native American perspective illustrates, culturally diverse communities, families, and their children do not characteristically have the academic/research bases to interpret and critically review the agendas imposed upon them. Worse than that, there is no retrievable forum in which we make significant efforts to find out what these parents want for their children.

We do not seek ways to integrate the parents' perceptions of their children in school with our expectations for these students as learners. We pay scant attention to cultural values and totems in the construction of our school curriculum for their children.

The cherished values of the culture are rarely translated nor incorporated, reviewed nor exhibited as prime ingredients of the regular classroom or school curriculum. How can we approach these communities? Would any amount of sincerity be anything less than ludicrous, even if we went "hat-in-hand" to parents to assure them of our benevolent intentions and our sensitivity to their needs and cherished ideals.

We use standardized or "pseudo" scientific data collection devices to evaluate student "success" in school and pretend that feeding this data back to parents and communities provides them with some kind of meaningful information about their children. This usually confounds parents' understanding of their children's school experience and further alienates kids and parents from schools, or at best demeans the parents' participation.

Each research instrument we use to examine and collect parents' perceptions does little more than constrain the discretionary range of their answers.

My purpose with this presentation is to suggest more democratic, culturally appropriate parameters for evaluating and incorporating parental input into their children's educational futures. We must disabuse ourselves of the traditional hard science paradigm in research and formulate a more democratic collection and collation of

information designed to feed-back to communities - families and educators - rather than to continue to co-opt their primary rights to the education of their children. We must maintain an integrity in data collation, yet, underlay the information with new considerations as to the implications for families from varying cultural backgrounds. The advantage of this kind of evaluation is to help establish a kind of paradigm in which the use of data collected empowers the primary participants. Many have talked about importance of this process, but ERIC searches reveal the dearth of relevant information.

Conflict of Traditional Evaluation "Paradigms" and Participants' Perceptions

Some might respond that "qualitative" evaluation methods offer an alternative paradigm. First, it would benefit discourse on educational research and evaluation to avoid the rampant popular tendency to use the term "qualitative" as a catch-all descriptor for methods which are not "quantitative." This catch-all category presents a case of unnecessary vagueness when used to refer to a variety of social science research methods including ethnographic, case study, and some other ethnomethodological techniques. (Schlessman-Frost and Saunders, 1986). Researchers have used the term "qualitative" research to justify their simplistic approaches to "minority" cultures. Researchers and evaluators could make their talk about methods clear by referring specifically to a method, e.g. an ethnographic interview or a case study.

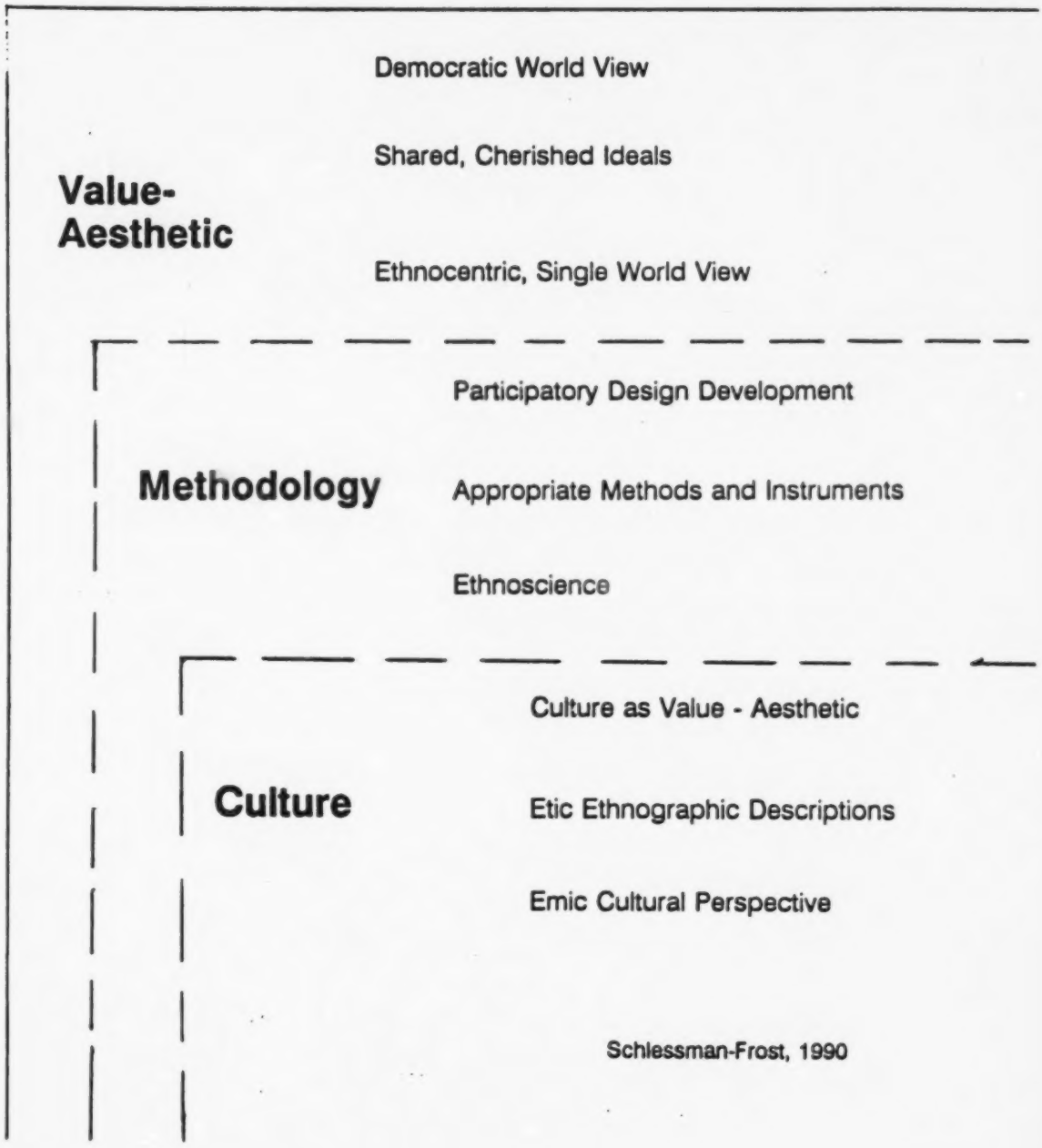
Furthermore, these social science research paradigms do not resolve the challenge of incorporating the value-aesthetic as a prescription into evaluation. Naturalistic methods produce descriptive data, a picture of "what is." Descriptions cannot provide a transition to cumulative or coordinated conclusions. Evaluations conducted using naturalistic, ethnographic, or "grounded" methods join the age old conundrum of the is-ought relational. It is too easy, and fallacious, to make a simple transition from description to prescription.

What is needed is a prescriptive design, an informing hypothesis, that is deliberately generated from an articulated value base and set of assumptions, an heuristic to empower a community to organize "the booming confusion of the universe" to meet some desired educational end.

Multicultural Educational Evaluation: A Democratic Model

The choice of this democratic model is a prescriptive approach to model design. The model serves as a prescriptive design, an informing hypotheses. It is comprehensive, and each category applies at each level in parallel form.

Figure A: A Democratic Model: Multicultural Educational Evaluation



Value-Aesthetic:

The most fundamental assumption of this model is democracy or the democratic principle. Morris Bigge asked me in our session at Salt Lake City for a definition of "democracy." Democracy is participation by people in any decisions which affect them, at least in principle. This model does "impose" the democratic principle on participating cultures. The use of this model "forces" each group involved to contribute to education and educational evaluation as part of a larger, broader human rights system.

The most promising value-aesthetic focus cross-culturally is to identify shared, cherished ideals from multiple cultures. Such an approach is illustrated in Susan McAllister Swap's "Comparing Three Philosophies of Home-School Collaboration." (1990) Her third "philosophy" of parent involvement, "partnership for school success," emphasizes success for all children in a school. Parent-educator partnership is viewed as a fundamental component of children's school success. This approach is characterized by "unity of purpose," "empowerment," and "building on strengths." (Hopfenberg, et. al., 1990) Similarly, democratic evaluation will be generated from a shared value system agreed upon by multiple cultures in a pluralistic society, in contrast to current evaluation designs through which values are imposed by a dominant culture upon all participants.

A caveat to the democratic shared value system is that each culture will bring with it an ethnocentric, single world view. To succeed in development of a shared system within multicultural democracy, each single world view must be respected, but no world view, majority or non-majority, may presume to impose limited values upon others. Each culture must assume participatory responsibility. Democracy will not succeed if any culture excludes others or isolates itself. This is perhaps the most difficult fine line for any group or culture to draw. How does a non-majority culture maintain its distinct identity and still participate in shared goal setting with the broader society? Perhaps each culture would develop a continuum of values ranging from private, sacred, or religious, on the one hand, to the public, sharable and democratic on the other. Such sharing will be necessary if we are to avoid A Brave New World.

Methodology

The shared value system of a multicultural democracy will be operationalized into new forms of educational evaluation through participatory design development. External evaluations developed by a power elite in the dominant culture cannot be imposed upon community members if that society claims to be a democracy and education is to be a part of that process.

Some materials produced for U.S. Federal program evaluation presents evaluators as quintessential ethnocentrics. The only mention of any "cultural" considerations in two

federal evaluation publications is a data analysis illustration demonstrating how to report ethnicity for participants. (Hawkins, J. and B. Nederhood, 1987; Ralph, J. & M.C. Dwyer, 1988)

Representatives of each participating culture, or culturally sensitive evaluators, should select or be involved in the development of appropriate methods and instruments. If evaluation specialists are not available from each culture, cultural consultants could work with professional evaluators. This would require a new breed of evaluation specialist, educated in processes for reconstructing methods and instruments toward shared community goals. Culturally appropriate evaluation methods and instruments will not just be translations of dominant culture evaluations into the native language. The method of evaluation, cooperative vs. independent, should also match preferred cultural interaction styles.

There may be no easily identifiable cultural taxonomies upon which to base evaluation methodology for many current cultures. The impact of western or global technological assimilation has altered "traditional" cultures. For example, ethnographies of many Native American cultures are already half a century old. Ethnoscientific (Sturtevant, 1964) studies of 21st century cultures will contribute to development of culturally appropriate methodologies.

Culture

Culture must be incorporated into evaluation's discourse categories if evaluation is to become a contributing part of the democratic process of education. The three-level definition of culture used in this model (Figure A) provides a comprehensive definition of the concept.

Anthropology shares with other social sciences the Methodenstreit of the 19th century concern for meanings established on cooperative terms with those being studied. The Emic perspective should be considered, for it reflects the world view of each culture in its own terms. Etic categories, traditional categories of anthropology, provide cultural description in more uniform ways.

There is a view of culture beyond anthropology's descriptive science. Culture as a value-aesthetic completes this comprehensive definition. "Culture is a qualitative format, an aesthetic form, which serves to regulate a wide range of personal, social activity in the life of some determinate group - indeed, it constitutes the group as such." (Villemain, 1976, p. 44).

Some Policy Recommendations

Participants, parents, students, teachers, in a democratic evaluation process should use their language of choice when providing input.

The perceptions, criteria for worth, of those affected by the educational process should be incorporated into the evaluation goals.

Cultural values should be given high priority and not be violated by evaluation procedures. The worth of these values does not have to be "proven" or justified to some funding agency nor to the dominant educational research, evaluation elite.

Ethnoscientific studies establish cultural taxonomies for education goals, which should be incorporated into the evaluation categories.

The methods and instruments of the evaluation should be developed by or in conjunction with those participating in the educational process.

The design of the evaluation, its goals, methods, instruments, should be formulated in and run analogically parallel to the group processes being evaluated.

Results of educational evaluation, which are generated by culturally biased paradigm and instruments, specifically standardized test scores, should not be published as negative reflections on those communities involved. There should be a community privacy of information code.

Shared and cherished ideals for a group should be used to identify the **enlightened self interest** procedures for community education. Modifications and corrective measures should always be established within the cultural framework of those being evaluated.

Evaluations, which open options and contribute to shared futures for multiple cultures, set parameters for "new" educational evaluation/research paradigms.

Summary

Again, the purpose of this type of research/evaluation should be to re-educate the participants in the process and not to reach "conclusions" derived from statistical machinations of data collected by inappropriate instruments, or in the traditional anthropological method, "objectively" to describe the dichotomies of Native and Western school cultures. The bottom line for this type of evaluation is not the use of usual descriptive information gained from such standardized, normed, instruments. Rather the intent is to prescriptively reinform the participants of their own perceptions of their children's school environment, instruction, and values transmitted. This reflexive use of

their own information empowers parents and the community by encouraging them to participate knowledgeably in the schooling of their children.

The exciting possibilities for everyone involved, evaluator, educator, parent, **child**, is to turn the evaluation process into a contributing educational part in the growth of the community. Our purpose is not research for research, but to contribute directly back to the community. Unfortunately, community reinformation has been rare.

Educational evaluation should become a part of the democratic process, not merely as an end, but as an integral composition of means - methods - ends.

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